



HAVE YOU EVER

By Scott Daughtry

Have you ever stood on the rock jetty near Fort Macon in the early morning as the sun comes up over the Atlantic Ocean – watching Harlequin Ducks swim among the rocks while shrimp boats loaded with a nights catch glide slowly back through Beaufort Inlet - alternately tipping their outrigger in the channel swells in a seeming salute to that old brick soldier?

Have you ever stood on the top of the highest point in the eastern United States - when the snow was so deep that its insulating effect deafened all sound and you thought you could hear your own heart beating - and on a clear day while looking out over most of three states you believed that you could almost see tomorrow coming?

Have you ever walked along the beaches at Fort Macon, Hammocks Beach, and Fort Fisher on a full moon summer night – and watched sea creatures lumber out of the phosphorescent surf and onto the beach to deposit golf ball size eggs in the sand – and then with great effort slip back into the black shimmering Atlantic waters in a ritual that has repeated itself millions of years before any human footprint was seen on those beaches?

Have you ever watched a dark leather-skinned alligator glide off the bank into a lake that contains animals not found anyplace else in the entire world?

Have you ever paddled a canoe slowly through an ancient millpond swamp, passed cypress trees that were far older than our country, or paddled on a north-flowing whitewater river that may be among the oldest in the world?

Have you ever stood on fossil-laden ninety-foot high cliffs in the late summer evening – watching below while white-tailed deer with racks as big as clothes baskets swim slowly across the quiet Neuse River?

Have you ever walked through the oak-hickory forest at William B Umstead in late October when the leaves were falling like colored snow?

Have you ever walked on a carpet of trout lilies along the banks of the powerful Cape Fear - when the rhododendron petals were falling off the top of a mighty rock raven's roost like pink rain?

Have you ever seen a painted bunting, a rainbow snake, or a pink lady slipper, or a scarlet tanager, or glossy ibis, or gray fox or a red-cockaded woodpecker?

Have you ever seen animal-eating plants that occur in only a very tiny spot in the Carolinas?

Have you ever seen a bobcat run across the trail at Pettigrew, watched black bear climb a tree at Singletary, flushed wild turkeys of the road at Stone Mountain or watched bald eagle soar over Jordan Lake?

Have you ever sat on the top of a 600 foot exposed granite mountain in the late evening - watching the sun set over the blue ridge escarpment and wondered how something as small as one man could ever make any difference in such a vast world?

Well I have done all of these things and more in a North Carolina State Park – and in doing them I have received compensation far exceeding my small labors.

